



Michigan State AFL-CIO

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May 16, 2012

To: Members of the Michigan Senate Reforms, Restructuring and Reinvention Committee
From: Michael Keller, Legislative Director for the Michigan State AFL-CIO
Re: House Bill 4059 (S-4)

The bill before you today would amend the Public Employee Relations Act to prohibit public employers from paying union officials for time used conducting union business.

The practice of paying union officials to conduct legitimate union business is currently a decision made between the local employer and the local union. The decision whether or not to use paid time is made when both parties discuss the issue, weigh the costs and benefits and agree what the best practice is for their operation. This is truly the advantage of local control.

This practice is not in every contract. In some union contracts, union leave is unpaid, except for grievance and problem solving issues; other contracts contain other specific provisions. The size of the workgroup, the nature of the work and other factors are considered by local leadership when these decisions are made. These decisions should remain at the local level where people who are doing the work know which practices work best for their operation.

Permitting union officials to become engaged early on in a problem will typically allow for a quicker and less costly resolution. Addressing employee concerns is part of good business practices. The result can lead to better employer relations, higher productivity, process improvements, a safer worksite and improvements in quality.

Prohibiting union officials from that early engagement, as these bills would do, leave problems unchecked and allow them to grow in complexity and severity becoming more difficult to manage and resolve.

Michigan AFL-CIO opposes this bill because it is unnecessary step backward in employee-management relations that will cause hardship to our members and to State services.

Thank you for you time.